Victim Advocate Recruitment, Selection, and Training

Block 25

Sexual Assault Response Coordinator Training

Why People Volunteer

- Do something useful to help others
- Give back for a service they or someone they know received
- Enjoy volunteer work
- Learning experience
- Meet others and be part of community

Brudney, 1994

Types of Recruitment

- Warm Body Recruitment
  - Disseminating information about the program and volunteer needs as widely as possible
  - Ex: Brochures, posters, flyers, base TV, base newspaper, brief at Commander's Calls, e-mails, websites
- Targeted Recruitment
- Concentric Circles Recruitment

McCurley, 1994

Types of Recruitment

- Warm Body Recruitment
- Targeted Recruitment
  - Used when looking for people with particular skills or interest
  - Focus recruitment efforts where these people are likely to be found
  - Motivational appeal
- Concentric Circles Recruitment

McCurley, 1994

Types of Recruitment

- Warm Body Recruitment
- Targeted Recruitment
- Concentric Circles Recruitment
  - Word of mouth or snowball effect
  - People who are involved with the program recruit people they know
  - Personal appeal
  - Most common type of recruitment

McCurley, 1994

Your Pitch

What Volunteers Will Get Out of It

- New skills and information
- Knowledge that they are making a difference
- A community within the program
- Military receive Special Experience Identifier (SEI)
- Civilians receive an addendum to Position Description (PD)

Screening Process

- Application
- Interview
- References and Recommendations
- Background Check

Victim Advocate Eligibility

- Must possess the maturity and experience to assist in a very sensitive situation
- Only active duty military personnel and DoD civilian employees selected by the SARC may serve as VAs
  - Appropriate unit commander or agency head must concur before a volunteer can be selected as a VA
  - Appropriate military personnel may be detailed to serve as VAs, particularly in GSUs and deployed locations

Who Cannot Be A Victim Advocate

- Medical Personnel, FAP, Life Skills, and ADAPT
- Office of the Staff Judge Advocate
- Office of the Wing Chaplain
- Security Forces, OSI
- Command Chiefs, First Sergeants
- Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) Office
- Other positions that pose a potential conflict of interest

Application

- AF Application covers
  - Source of interest in role
  - What they bring to the role
  - Expectations
  - Commitment and over-commitment
  - Personal trauma
  - Criminal history and background check

Application

- Standard AF application available on Knowledge Now
- Can add questions
- Allows for screening major red flags

Conducting the Interview

- Interviews need to give you real data about how the applicant will do the job
- Prepare list of questions
  - use same questions for everyone
- Use scenario interviewing to learn what the applicant's baseline skill level is

Conducting the Interview

- Explore applicant's interests, abilities, and motivation for doing this job
- Discuss position requirements
- Sell the program
- Look for indications of good fit
- Explain what will happen next

Brudney, 1994

Conducting the Interview

- Sample questions
  - There are many organizations looking for volunteers. What made you chose this one?
  - What skills and experiences do you bring to the table?
  - How would you respond if a victim said…
  - Tell me about a time when you made a mistake.
  - Describe your method of handling conflict.

Controversial Issues

- Discuss controversial issues with potential Victim Advocates:
  - Abortion
  - Emergency Contraception
  - Religious Issues
  - Lifestyle Issues (drinking, adultery, drug use)
  - Prior Victimization
- VAs must be able to respect victim's wishes and not impose their own beliefs

Danger Signs to Watch For

- Recent or unprocessed trauma in the volunteer or volunteer's family/significant other's life
- Spontaneous, personal sharing that is unresponsive to questions posed, or inappropriate to the moment
- Marked deficits in listening skills

Danger Signs to Watch For

- Over-sexualized interpersonal style, language, or clothing
- Grossly unrealistic expectations about role or responsibilities
- Tendency to over-commit to too many things or to things that the volunteer can’t reasonably manage

Danger Signs to Watch For

- Victim blaming attitudes of any kind
- Inability to describe self with any depth of insight
- Inability to describe motivation to volunteer beyond “helping people”

References

- Check references (personal or professional)
  - Conduct telephone interview or ask for letters of recommendation
  - Ask about good and bad
- Obtain signed Supervisor's Statement of Understanding
- Can also request Commander's recommendation
- Any written recommendation should be sent directly to the SARC

Background Check

- Obtain consent to do background check
- Figure out what process works best at your installation:
  - Ask OSI to review applicants
  - Ask applicant's commander about any potentially disqualifying information
    - Incidents of family violence or sexual assault
    - Other incidents of misconduct in recent past
    - Records of discipline or non-judicial punishment

Creating a Good Selection Process

- Include others in your selection process (assistant, experienced volunteers, SART members)
- Create clear criteria that are applied equally (rather than going on gut instinct)
  - Keep notes from interview
  - Include comments
  - Use checklist and/or ranking system

Selection

- Invite applicant to attend training
- Explain final selection based on satisfactorily completing training
- Discuss with applicants their expectations and the actual challenges and expectations of the job
  - Provide a job description

What to Include in a Job Description

- Job title and purpose
- Benefits to applicant
- Qualifications for the position
- Time requirements
- Job responsibilities and activities
- Reporting relationship and supervision

Brudney, 1994

Tips on Screening and Selection

- Make the selection a prized position that people want to have – it's more than just earning a bullet for an appraisal!
- Try to recruit a diverse group
- Invite more applicants than needed. Some will drop out
- But, do not recruit *too many* so you can keep them busy and involved

Tips on Screening and Selection

- Give yourself and the applicant an out by saying that the work is not for everyone
- Be clear about the screening and selection process so they will know what to expect
- Keep in mind that you can have different types of volunteers
  - Victim Advocates
  - Prevention Volunteers, Speakers
  - Outreach Volunteers

Victim Advocate Training

- Training allows opportunity to observe potential volunteer to be certain s/he is a good match for the program.
- Also gives potential volunteers the opportunity to decide this isn't a commitment they want to make.
- Victim Advocates must receive all 40 hours of the official Air Force training before being assigned to work with victims

VA Training Course

Overview and Curriculum

- Each SARC has been provided a CD that contains the complete VA training course
  - Similar in appearance and organization to SARC training course
    - MS Power Point slides, divided into training blocks; use of practical exercises
  - Most sexual assault subject-matter slides have extensive instructor notes
- VA course can be longer than SARC training (currently crafted for 40 hours of training, easily expandable to 50 hours)
- Assumes that VA trainees will be taught in groups – course can be modified for individual instruction
- Includes recommendations for relevant films (these will need to be purchased) – films are a useful component, but not essential

VA Training Course
Instructing the Course

- SARCs may add material to meet specific installation and local requirements
- SARCs are expected to reach out to installation-level resources to enhance existing training material or otherwise enrich the training experience
  - Example: site visits can be used to enhance the AF procedure blocks (medical, investigative, legal)
- SARCs are expected to reach out to the appropriate base-level functional organizations for instruction support
  - Example: Reach out to OSI to provide an instructor for Investigative Procedures block (and arrange a site visit)

VA Training Course
Implementing the Training Course

- Ideal training group is no more than 20 advocates, prescreened for appropriateness
- Training space should be informal and comfortable
  - Each student should have a writing area/desk
  - Pay attention to AV needs, especially if you want to use films and Power Point
- There should be reasonable room (and proper acoustics) for breaking out into small groups for practical exercise work
- Instructors should be assisted by facilitators as required to support role-plays and practical exercises

VA Training Course Scheduling

- Give people time to process material
- Accommodate the scheduling needs of the majority of the advocates
- Mix week nights and full weekend days so that you have some longer stretches of time to teach long blocks of instruction
  - E.g. Monday 6-9pm, Wednesday 6-9pm, Saturday 10-6, for 3 weeks

Teaching Adults

- Adults have relevant experiences and opinions that need to be drawn upon to the integrate material
- Experiential learning is an essential means of teaching adults
- Most people learn through visual images
  - Visual materials must be appealing and contain the proper measure of contrast

Disclosure

- Be mindful of survivors in the room
- Model an appropriate level of disclosure
- Cause for concern:
  - Not previously disclosed to SARC
  - Lack of relevance to training issue
  - Escalation of emotional content of training
  - Dominating discussion

Facilitator Strategies

- Vary methods of teaching to enhance learning
  - Avoid death by Power Point
  - Utilize videos, guest speakers, exercises
- Vary intensity of course material
- Encourage participation and discussion
- Set ground rules
- Do check-in and check-out every day

VA Training Course Assessment

- Do ongoing assessment on whether the training is:
  - Communicating the core concepts
  - Engaging students in the learning activities
- Be prepared to reconsider teaching strategies if something isn't working with your group
- Share feedback and ideas with other SARCs to fine tune the training for future use

After the Training

- Offer acceptance
  - Review expectations, meeting and time requirements
  - Discuss program policy and procedures
  - sign Advocate Statement of Understanding
  - Do not accept anyone you have doubts about!
- submit AF Form 2096 for military SEI, Civilian supervisor submits for requested addendum to PD
- The SARC will determine when a new VA is ready to consult with victims on an independent basis (where possible, initial consults should be done as part of a team with the SARC or an experienced VA)

Quality Control

- Write a probationary period into your policies and procedures
- Include mentored direct service (OJT) in your orientation for new volunteers
- Make role plays part of on-going in-service training
- Talk to volunteers after every direct service contact to see how they think it went

Key Points

- Use a selection process that maximizes opportunities to assess the volunteer's appropriateness for the role
- Adult learning needs to be experiential and contain visual elements
- Facilitation of the training includes artful use of questions and techniques to stimulate audience participation
- The proffered Victim Advocate curriculum contains materials that the SARC will need to learn on their own to teach them
- SARCs MUST reach out to installation-level resources to enhance this training and access expert instructors in certain topic areas

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